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ABSTRACT

This agenda is based upon a detailed analysis of the actual courses teachers take in their baccalaureate programs. A course by course analysis was made of the programs that were completed by more than 3,000 teacher education graduates in 14 Southern states. Recommendations are made on: (1) student recruitment and admissions; (2) core curriculum or general education; (3) content preparation for both elementary and secondary teachers; (4) reorganization of the pedagogy curriculum; (5) structural changes in teacher education programs; (6) alternate certification programs; and (7) recruitment of minority teachers. (JD)

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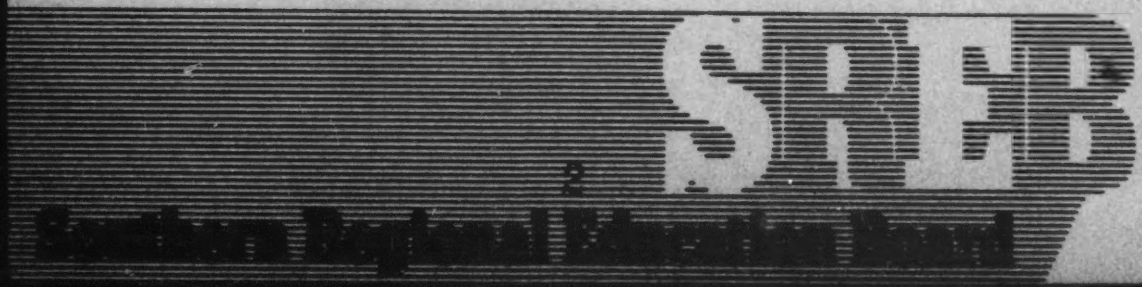

Improving Teacher Education: An Agenda for Higher Education and the Schools

A Report to
The Southern Regional Education Board by Its
Commission for Educational Quality

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Foreword

The improvement of teacher education has been a continuing priority of the Southern Regional Education Board. As stated in *The Need for Quality*, the 1981 report by the SREB Task Force on Higher Education and the Schools, "There is no single issue on which greater coordination between the schools and universities is needed than on how to strengthen teacher education programs."

The SREB Commission for Educational Quality was established to sustain and increase the momentum for educational reforms in Southern schools and colleges. In this statement the Commission builds upon prior SREB recommendations, and delves more deeply into curriculum issues in teacher preparation.

There is no dearth of suggestions by numerous groups about new directions for educating teachers. The advantage enjoyed by the Commission in recommending this statement is the recently acquired detailed knowledge of the actual courses teachers now take in their baccalaureate programs. SREB analyzed course by course the programs that were completed by more than 3,000 recent teacher education graduates in 14 Southern states. From that vantage, the Commission presents specific recommendations to improve the general education, academic majors, and pedagogy sequence that teachers should complete.

Winfred L. Godwin
President

Fundamental Assumptions

Recomendations based on courses teachers actually take

For most institutions, the path toward significant improvement of their teacher education programs will depend on modifying existing programs. Such modifications would not disband teacher education as a formal program, nor expand its length, nor disperse it entirely through other disciplines and departments. Some institutions, however, may wish to experiment with alternative models to prepare teachers, which provide pedagogy instruction to graduates who already hold a baccalaureate in an arts and sciences field.

The Commission has adhered to the following fundamental assumptions in its deliberations:

- Teachers must be better grounded both in general knowledge and in the subject areas they will teach. They must be seen first and foremost as high quality college students and graduates if the teaching profession is to gain needed prestige.
- Able students must be attracted into teaching.

Content and Methods

- In the absence of new and concerted recruitment efforts, the region will face a serious shortage of teachers. Higher salaries for teachers are critical, but outside the purview of higher education.
- Although for most teachers on-the-job experience under the direction of skilled teachers will be needed to sharpen teaching skills, some campus-based learning about pedagogical skills is a legitimate responsibility of college programs to prepare teachers.

These assumptions suggest several initiatives that could improve teacher education.

Student Recruitment and Admissions

Shortage of new, able teachers

Although increased enrollments have been reported for isolated teacher education programs, there is no evidence of general turnaround in the substantial decline of new graduates over the past decade. Previous studies have documented the lower academic abilities of students who intend to major in education compared to other students, as seen through college entrance test scores. The SREB transcript study* corroborates these studies with findings of lower SAT and ACT scores for graduates of teacher education as compared to students graduating from arts and sciences programs. These facts, in conjunction with the rise in elementary school enrollments, portend a shortage of able teachers for the region's schools.

The following recommendations suggest strategies for attracting more academically able students to the teaching profession:

1 Although states and colleges should hold fast to their minimum standards for admission into colleges of education, efforts should now be directed to attract students who more than meet the minimum criteria. Indeed, a worthy goal for the colleges of education is to raise the *average* of the scores of those admitted, to avoid the increasing clustering of scores at or near the minimum.

2 Selective research universities, which tend to attract the more talented students in the region, should reemphasize pre-service preparation of teachers. This is one way to raise the caliber of students preparing to become teachers.

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* *An Analysis of Transcripts of Teachers and Arts and Sciences Graduates;* the findings are highlighted in *Teacher Preparation: The Anatomy of a College Degree.* SREB, 1985.

3 States should grant loans and scholarships to attract better students into teaching careers. These loans should be forgiven if students teach in public schools. Colleges, too, should offer similar scholarships.

4 Beginning at the high school level, all strategies should be pursued to recruit more academically able students into teaching. Teachers, too, can positively influence the attitudes of their students about teaching careers.

5 Higher education's recruitment strategy must ultimately center on offering quality academic programs that make maximum use of the time students are enrolled.

Core Curriculum or General Education

Teachers' general education is weak

Although many college students fail to complete a college-level general education component that adequately covers each of the main divisions of the arts and sciences, those preparing to teach generally complete an even weaker program. According to the findings of the SREB transcript study, future teachers, as compared to arts and sciences students, complete fewer general education credits and less of what they do take is either truly college-level or upper-level coursework. Teachers, on the average, take fewer hours in mathematics, English, physics, chemistry, economics, history, political science, sociology, other social sciences, foreign languages, philosophy, and other humanities than the arts and sciences graduates. The disciplines in which teachers complete more general education credits are psychology, fine arts, biology, and geology.

Completion of a more rigorous general education program during the freshman and sophomore years, from which one could expect that students have mastered communication skills, honed critical thinking skills, and developed the ability to read at complex levels, is the essential change on which other improvements will hinge.

Four reform strategies are suggested to strengthen general education:

6 Colleges should allow credit toward graduation only for college-level courses, and not for courses that focus on high school skills and content. If students are not ready for college-level work, remedial courses must precede participation in a true college-level curriculum.

7 Until the current four-year college program truly represents college-level work, it makes no sense to extend its length, except as to accommodate non-credit remedial work.

8 Colleges should specify that the acceptable core curriculum or general education courses shall be the same regardless of student majors. Education majors, for example, should be expected to fulfill the same mathematics course requirements as other candidates for the bachelor of arts, and should not be allowed to substitute special mathematics courses designed for elementary teachers.

9 Arts and sciences faculties should assess which of the many courses offered truly represent the core curriculum in the academic divisions of the arts and sciences. Students should be restricted to those courses to fulfill their general education. The program at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill is a notable example of such reevaluation.

Content Preparation

Elementary teachers should be broadly educated across all of the major academic divisions — English, mathematics, science, social science, and other liberal arts. They need breadth in their academic preparation. If they are to develop as scholars, they also need to delve into some academic subjects more deeply than they are likely to do if they limit themselves mostly to introductory courses.

Elementary teachers need breadth in content

Secondary teachers generally complete a major in an academic subject. According to the SREB transcript study, however, they take fewer total hours in the major (and fewer of those hours are at the upper level) than is the case for arts and sciences graduates. The major for secondary teachers should be rigorous. In designing their majors it is important to consider that in many high schools secondary teachers are likely to teach a fairly broad range of related disciplines.

These recommendations address the academic preparation of teachers:

10 Elementary teachers should take some courses in academic disciplines at the upper level. Completion of an academic major is another way in which some elementary teachers, especially those who will teach older children, might obtain more depth in the undergraduate subject matter preparation.

11 States and colleges should examine the content of the majors for secondary teachers relative to the teachers' potential assignments in the high schools. While depth of study is important for secondary teachers, broad coverage is essential for areas such as science and social studies.

The Pedagogy Curriculum

More education credits than rules require

The SREB transcript study indicates that elementary and special education teachers are completing substantially more credits in education courses than are required by certification standards. Secondary teachers also complete somewhat more credits in education courses than state regulations specify. There is considerable variation among institutions regarding the average number of education courses teachers complete. This corroborates the lack of agreement about the requisite pedagogy courses.

The education community has not reached a consensus about a common core of knowledge that leads to effective teaching. In the absence of such a consensus, it is impossible to enumerate the necessary courses or topics that comprise the essence of a pedagogy curriculum. There is increasing agreement, however, about the topics to which more attention should be given, as well as about courses that heretofore have not made a major impact on effective teaching.

According to the SREB transcript study, elementary education majors spend an average of 19 semester hours in courses dealing with the techniques and materials of teaching language arts, arithmetic, social studies, science, art, reading, and physical education. A more generic approach to cover learning and teaching styles is needed to consolidate these courses. Indeed, instead of packaging the techniques and materials of teaching a subject into a separate course, these should be integrated into a more comprehensive approach, with emphasis on child development and learning theories. By reducing the courseload on "methods" of teaching various content areas, elementary education majors gain time for academic coursework.

Reorganize and consolidate education courses

The "foundations" courses that cover the history, philosophy, and sociological as well as legal aspects of education and schools have little relevance to students before they teach in schools. Graduates of the colleges of education constantly give low ratings to these courses. The compression of ever more topics into these "Introduction to Education" courses has reduced them to snatches students are expected to digest and memorize, often without impact on their experience as beginning teachers.

Public education is a critical element of our democratic society. Therefore, all students, not only education majors, should understand the contribution of the public school system through general education studies in the relevant social science courses.

These recommendations are directed to education courses:

12 The colleges of education should assess their programs to determine what needs to be pared and what needs to be added. Ideally, education faculties should reevaluate all current offerings to determine the necessary content of the pre-service pedagogy program for teachers, rather than "cutting and pasting" to accommodate current offerings.

13 Evaluations of teacher education programs have consistently pointed to student teaching as the most valuable pre-service pedagogy course. The colleges of education should provide more opportunities throughout the pedagogy curriculum for practical applications whereby students can try out what is presented in lectures and readings.

14 One option for providing future teachers with more clinical experience than they presently gain is to use them as paraprofessionals in the schools. Many school systems are adding teacher aides to assist classroom teachers. States should develop cooperative programs to use education majors as teacher aides. This would be beneficial both to school districts and to teacher education programs.

15 "Methods" courses should be consolidated into a more generic approach, integrating methods and materials with information about child development and learning theory. The new research on effective teaching and classroom management provides insight into the teaching process that should be incorporated in the pedagogy curriculum.

16 The content of "foundations" courses should be redesigned into courses that delve deeply into the component subjects, and then be included in graduate in-service programs after teachers have gained experience in the classroom.

Structural Changes

State actions to overcome inertia

While it is preferable for reforms in higher education to originate within the institutions and the colleges of education, inertia and built-in rigidities tend to inhibit reforms. Therefore, there is a need for leadership at the state level, including the state higher education agencies, to assist in the implementation of changes that will strengthen the general education and pedagogy curriculum in the preparation of teachers. In considering such changes, state policymakers should evaluate alternate funding methods that would promote flexible personnel practices and program improvements.

The following six recommendations suggest strategies that will assist in bringing about changes in teacher education programs:

17 In each state the governor should appoint an ad hoc group to promote reforms in teacher education programs in the public institutions within the state. The private institutions should be urged to cooperate. The majority of members in such groups should be composed of superintendents or other representatives of the school districts that employ beginning teachers. The function of these groups would be to guide and monitor improvements in teacher education, as well as in certification regulations.

18 The improvement in teacher preparation must become an urgent item on the agenda of higher education coordinating or governing agencies, as well as with university and college presidents. The leaders of universities should engage the arts and sciences faculties in the preparation of teachers. Joint faculty appointments to education and arts and sciences departments provide one possibility for promoting a coordinated effort by faculties.

19 Universities must find ways of giving appropriate credit to faculty for service they provide to schools. This is an especially important concern for rewarding college of education faculty. The definition of rewardable research could be expanded to include the development of knowledge directly related to practical and current problems in the public schools. The unique role that college of education faculty can play in their community should be encouraged.

20 All education faculty whose courses deal with teaching and learning should have prolonged and regular contacts with the public schools at appropriate intervals.

21 Financial rewards should accrue to those colleges of education that are willing to make serious curriculum and structural changes to improve their programs. Colleges that are willing to embark on large-scale and meaningful reforms should be given more assistance than those that only develop one or two new courses. Those that redesign the program should be given more support than those which only superimpose courses on top of the existing program. Financial assistance should be given to the retraining of college of education faculty and to early retirement.

22 States should develop funding for education programs that is related to the quality of the program and its graduates. Adherence to the enrollment-driven formula is no incentive to produce reforms in the colleges of education.

Alternate Approaches

Intensive summer preparation

Alternate certification programs should be supported on an experimental basis in which liberal arts graduates are certified to teach without having taken the undergraduate teacher education program. These alternate programs, however, should recognize that preparation in the teaching art is needed, along with professional field supervision. As an example, the approach being tested by the University of Tennessee at Knoxville and Memphis State University, with support from the Lyndhurst Foundation, might be replicated. In these programs strong liberal arts graduates enroll in an intensive 10-week summer course in "pedagogy" taught by a team consisting of master secondary school teachers, faculty from the college of education, and faculty from the disciplines which they plan to teach. They are then assigned a nine-month internship in a school, with a two-thirds teaching load. A master teacher provides supervision and assistance, and the faculty team continues to provide pedagogical training through seminars and consultations. The participating schools pay roughly two-thirds annual salary to the interns. Certification follows satisfactory performance in the internship. The Lyndhurst Foundation is also exploring the possibility of integrating this approach into a baccalaureate program.

Financial support for "MATs"

Some institutions may wish to consider the Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) as a variation to current teacher education programs. This program, which was popular in the 1960s, is usually aimed toward arts and sciences graduates who return for intensive campus-based work for two summers and serve a year-long internship. The success of attracting graduates into a 15-month training period to become teachers has, in the past, depended on available financial support. When the financial support disappeared for the programs that were started in the 1960s, the MAT programs floundered.

The Memphis State MAT program differs from the five-year programs leading to a master's degree that some other institutions are now offering. First, the Memphis program is open to graduates who have not taken any undergraduate education courses. Thus, students who choose this option may concentrate their entire undergraduate program on a liberal arts education. Second, the instruction on "methods" has been shifted to the schools, where master teachers instruct the student teachers during their nine-month internships.

Relationship to beginning teacher programs

There is some commonality between the approach of a prolonged clinical experience, such as in the MAT programs, and the beginning teacher programs which many states have adopted. In effect, both approaches include what amounts to a full year's internship, since it takes time to develop teaching and classroom management skills. These can only be gained in the classroom with assistance from experienced and outstanding teachers.

The issues in considering the two approaches revolve around whether the extra clinical experience should be obtained by a teacher as a paid employee, or by a student-teacher as a college student. Who will be providing most of the training in the clinical component—other teachers in the school, or college faculty traveling to schools from campuses? While learning, is the teacher providing a service that merits being paid (on a full- or part-time basis), or is the teacher a student who should be paying tuition to a college?

This recommendation is concerned with the adoption of alternate approaches to the certification of teachers:

23 Institutions and states should explore alternative teacher education and certification models which open teaching to a wider range of talented students while maintaining standards. These alternate approaches should emphasize the development of professional teaching skills primarily in the school classroom setting.

Minority Teachers

Steep decline in number of minority teachers

A critical issue is how to increase the number of quality minority teachers in the schools. The percentage of minority teachers in the total teaching force is declining, while the percentage of minority children in the nation's schools is rising. This is a major problem because minority youngsters require role models who embody the value of further education and personally attest to the link between study and future success.

The decline in the minority teaching force represents not only failure rates on tests, but also a more severe decline of minority enrollments in teacher education programs relative to white students. The decline in enrollment for teacher education in recent years among the historically black colleges of education is double that of other member institutions of the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education. While the fear of failing tests may account for some of the black decline, another factor is the growth of opportunities for blacks in fields other than teaching.

Minority teachers and tests needed

The high failure rates among minority candidates on teacher certification tests is an important issue. In state after state, the results show failure rates among black candidates as high as two-thirds, while white applicants fail in the 10 to 30 percent range. We can anticipate a continuing decline in minority representation among teachers unless strong actions are taken.

While the testing requirements being instituted in many states have contributed greatly to this decline, testing is needed to guarantee teachers with at least certain basic proficiencies. It is important that the issue not be cast as a choice between having more minority teachers or the tests. Both are essential and we can have both if decisive steps are taken at the state and institutional levels. These actions should emphasize the enhanced preparation of minorities in high school and college, as well as the attraction of better students to teacher education programs.

Current passage rates on teacher certification tests do not yet reflect the tightened academic standards in the nation's public schools. As these take hold, there is the hope that basic skills, which fundamentally account for the failure rates on teacher certification tests, will improve.

Better preparation essential

As efforts progress to improve undergraduate education through tightening entry, curricular, and graduation standards, specific steps must be taken to provide better preparation to disadvantaged students so that they can meet the higher standards. SREB currently is leading a project to improve the ability of minority students to meet higher standards on certification tests through specific actions in faculty, instructional, and curriculum development. The strategy is focusing not on attacking the tests and standards, but on providing better collegiate education so that the test standards can be met. States should support these special efforts to improve the collegiate preparation of minority teachers.

The following recommendations suggest ways to assure an adequate supply of minority teachers:

24 Leaders in minority communities should mount a comprehensive campaign to recruit qualified minority students into teaching careers. These leaders should explain the critical role of minority teachers in the region's classrooms.

25 States should establish special financial incentives to attract qualified minority students into teaching careers. These incentives may include scholarships and loans directed to students who are financially disadvantaged or who will teach in underprivileged rural and urban areas. The loans should carry service forgiveness clauses.